

~~SECRET~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

17 March 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Motives in Seeking a Summit Conference

CONCLUSIONS

1. We believe that the USSR strongly desires a Summit Conference; its primary objective is a relaxation of tensions which would reduce the danger of thermonuclear war and facilitate the current Soviet strategy of peaceful competition. The USSR probably believes that this objective would be furthered both by the very fact of a meeting at the Summit, and by agreement on one or more issues which the Soviets probably have concluded can--sooner or later--be resolved on terms favorable to them. The Soviet leaders probably estimate that even if they do not succeed in getting a conference, they will profit by being the power which sought negotiations, in contrast to the "intransigent" attitude of the US.

2. However, the rigidity of the Soviet position on substantive issues suggests that the USSR hopes primarily to create a general

DOCUMENT NO. 5  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐  
☒ DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 12 1 APR 1980  
AUTH: STAT

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

atmosphere of detente, rather than to settle many of the outstanding issues which divide East and West. Nevertheless, it probably expects that the growing Western pressures for accommodation, together with potential divergencies among the Western allies, can be exploited to make progress toward at least implicit Western recognition of the status quo in Eastern Europe, some form of limited disengagement in Central Europe, and a nuclear test ban.

#### I. SOVIET MOTIVES AND OBJECTIVES IN SEEKING A SUMMIT CONFERENCE

3. The drum-fire of Soviet notes and letters--a sort of public pre-Summit negotiation--together with the substantive rigidity of the Soviet position suggest that the Soviets think that the value of a conference for them lies primarily not in settlements made or agreements reached, but in the general impact which the conference may have on world opinion. The USSR is interested primarily in creating an atmosphere of detente without a broad series of compromise settlements on key issues dividing East and West. Soviet pressure for a large conference, preferably with neutrals represented, as well as for an early meeting without extended prior consultations, tend to buttress this view. The Soviets seek to picture themselves as the foremost advocate of relaxed international tensions, in contrast to the alleged intransigent stance and war preparations of the West--and in particular

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

of the US. Whether or not the conference were to take place, the Soviets would expect to profit substantially by exploitation of apparent Western reluctance or refusal to negotiate and to work for lessening the danger of war.

4. Apart from seeking a general relaxation of tensions, the Soviets probably hope to find some give in the Western position on certain issues, particularly a ban on nuclear tests and disengagement in Central Europe. They probably regard the growing interest in many European quarters in these proposals, reflecting general Western European desire for a broad detente, as creating pressure on the US. In this connection, the Soviet leaders appear to believe that their own recent satellite and ICBM achievements have given them a pronounced political advantage, which they are seeking to exploit. Whether or not they originally intended to press hard for a Summit meeting when they first broached the idea in December, the favorable reaction of world opinion has subsequently encouraged them. By urging such a conference, the Soviets apparently hope to capitalize on the advantages of having taken this initiative and to probe potential weaknesses or divergencies in the Western position. They appear hopeful that growing pressures in the West for accommodation, and their own present position of strength, will force the Western powers to compromise on some issues on which the USSR desires an agreement.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

5. We believe that the Soviet maneuvers in connection with a Summit Conference reflect a lively concern over reducing the threat of nuclear war. The Soviet leadership's present air of confidence that the USSR is outstripping the West is probably tempered by the realization that a cataclysmic nuclear conflict is the one event which could most quickly and decisively frustrate all their hopes. We believe that despite their own growing deterrent power they greatly fear war by miscalculation, for example, in the event of another uprising in Eastern Europe. Moreover, if the East-West tensions could be made less acute, the underdeveloped countries would probably become less wary and hence more susceptible to Soviet political influence and economic penetration, and divisions among the Western allies might grow. Thus the current Soviet politico-economic strategy would be served.

6. The Soviet leaders are also seeking to offset the impetus to Western countermeasures evoked by the recent Soviet technological successes. Though confident of their own long term ability to outstrip the West, they realize that their present favorable position may be only transitory. They are concerned over such developments as the accelerated US defense buildup, the prospective stationing of IRBMs around the Bloc periphery, and Western efforts to strengthen the various regional alliances.

- 4 -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

7. We do not believe that the Soviet leaders or Khrushchev personally feel under any strong domestic pressure in seeking a Summit Conference. A Summit meeting and Soviet successes in working for "peace" would probably enhance the popularity of the regime at home and might permit devoting more resources to domestic uses. Of course Khrushchev would almost certainly like the resultant fillip to his prestige and position from a successful Summit meeting. But these are not primary Soviet motives in our view.

## II. PROBABLE SOVIET POSITIONS ON KEY ISSUES

8. The Soviet leaders clearly hope that a Summit meeting would again, as in July 1955, establish a widely accepted picture of East-West accord and lessened danger of war--even though no solution of basic East-West issues had been achieved. But if at least agreements in principle could be reached on one or more issues, it would enhance the resulting climate of detente, and offer opportunities for further propaganda and political moves. We believe that the Soviets do expect to make some progress toward agreement on certain issues, which are discussed below.

9. Status quo in Eastern Europe. In view of their evident sensitivity over the situation in Eastern Europe, the Soviets are

- 5 -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

placing considerable stress on securing at least implicit Western recognition of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. They are adamantly refusing to discuss the Satellites, and their proposals for an atom-free zone in Central Europe, mutual troop reductions, a German peace treaty, and a NATO-Warsaw Pact non-aggression treaty would all contribute to formalizing the Eastern European status quo.

10. Disengagement in Europe. The Soviet proposals for disengagement are also aimed at reducing the capabilities of the NATO forces. Such a reduction is probably viewed by the Soviets as encouraging the withdrawal of US and UK forces from the NATO shield, and as limiting Western ability to intervene effectively in the case of another Satellite explosion. Three related proposals are being advanced by the USSR: (a) the Rapacki Plan for a de-nuclearized zone in Central Europe; (b) a thinning out of conventional forces in Germany and possibly elsewhere in Europe; and (c) a non-aggression pact between the NATO and Warsaw Pact nations, designed to reassure Western Europe that there is no direct Soviet threat. The Soviets may believe that there is a good chance of eventually gaining agreement on some variant of the Rapacki Plan in view of the wide interest it has aroused in Western Europe. They appear willing to pay some price for such an agreement in terms of willingness to deny themselves

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

forward bases for nuclear weapons, to accept some controls, and to withdraw some forces. We do not believe, however, that the USSR would be willing to withdraw all of its forces from Eastern Europe.

11. German Reunification. Moreover, the Soviets are highly unlikely to permit any disengagement scheme to be linked to German reunification. One reason for Soviet insistence upon the participation of others than the Big Four in a Summit meeting is to undercut Western arguments for discussion of Germany on the basis of continuation of the Geneva discussions. In fact, the Soviet proposals on disengagement and for discussion of a German peace treaty with the GDR and Federal Republic present, seem designed to promote continued division of Germany. The Soviets may eventually agree to discussion of the German question, but they would probably simply reiterate their present stand.

12. Nuclear Test Ban and Disarmament Measures. The Soviets wish agreement on a nuclear test suspension, and if possible a ban on use of nuclear weapons, which they believe would inhibit the West's use of its nuclear deterrent power. Ambassador Thompson has suggested that in view of the campaign the Soviets have conducted on this issue, they would also regard a test ban agreement as greatly enhancing their prestige. We have estimated that the Soviets would at least

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

initially abide by a test suspension. They would probably be willing to accept some limited test monitoring. They might even accept some zone of mutual inspection for prevention of surprise attack.

13. The most recent Soviet statements indicate that the Kremlin regards US proposals for control of space weapons as an effort to apply controls in a field where the USSR is ahead. Moscow will almost certainly continue to tie this proposal to liquidation of foreign military bases. We doubt that the USSR expects much progress toward Summit agreement on these issues, but it will exploit them to keep up pressure for US withdrawals.

14. Reduction of Tensions in the Middle East and Far East.

Notwithstanding Soviet proposals to "reduce tensions" in the Middle East, we doubt that the USSR is willing to trade any concessions in this area for Western concessions on other issues. Instead the Kremlin seems to be after some form of broad agreed limitation on great power intervention in the area which would facilitate Soviet penetration and encourage neutralism. Therefore the USSR will probably repeat its call for a great power pledge not to "interfere" in the area, and possibly also not to ship any more arms to Middle East countries. Though the Soviets probably would not expect such agreements to be reached, the sheer fact of East-West discussion would serve the Soviet

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

aim of forcing Western recognition of the Soviet right to participate in great power decisions affecting the Middle East. As for Far Eastern issues, Soviet failure to propose these issues for Summit discussion suggests that the USSR desires not to allow the US to avoid a Summit Conference because of our position in Communist China.

15. Other Measures to Reduce Tensions. The Soviets have also advanced other proposals "to reduce international tensions." In calling for relaxation of trade controls, the Soviets are capitalizing on the unpopularity of such restrictions in many Western countries. They probably expect to encourage further relaxation of controls and thus to benefit from greater access to Western technology. As bait they will offer vague promises of greater trade. Similarly, the Soviets are seeking to claim the initiative, and to appear as more cooperative than the US, in promoting cultural and other exchanges. They have called for an end to war propaganda, charging the West with permitting statements which allegedly propagandize the idea of preventive war. Any Western efforts to reach agreement on this point might later be exploited as admission of previous guilt.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



SHERMAN KENT  
Assistant Director  
National Estimates